Met Office

NEWS

Summer 2018: A possible record-breaker?

Author: Press Office
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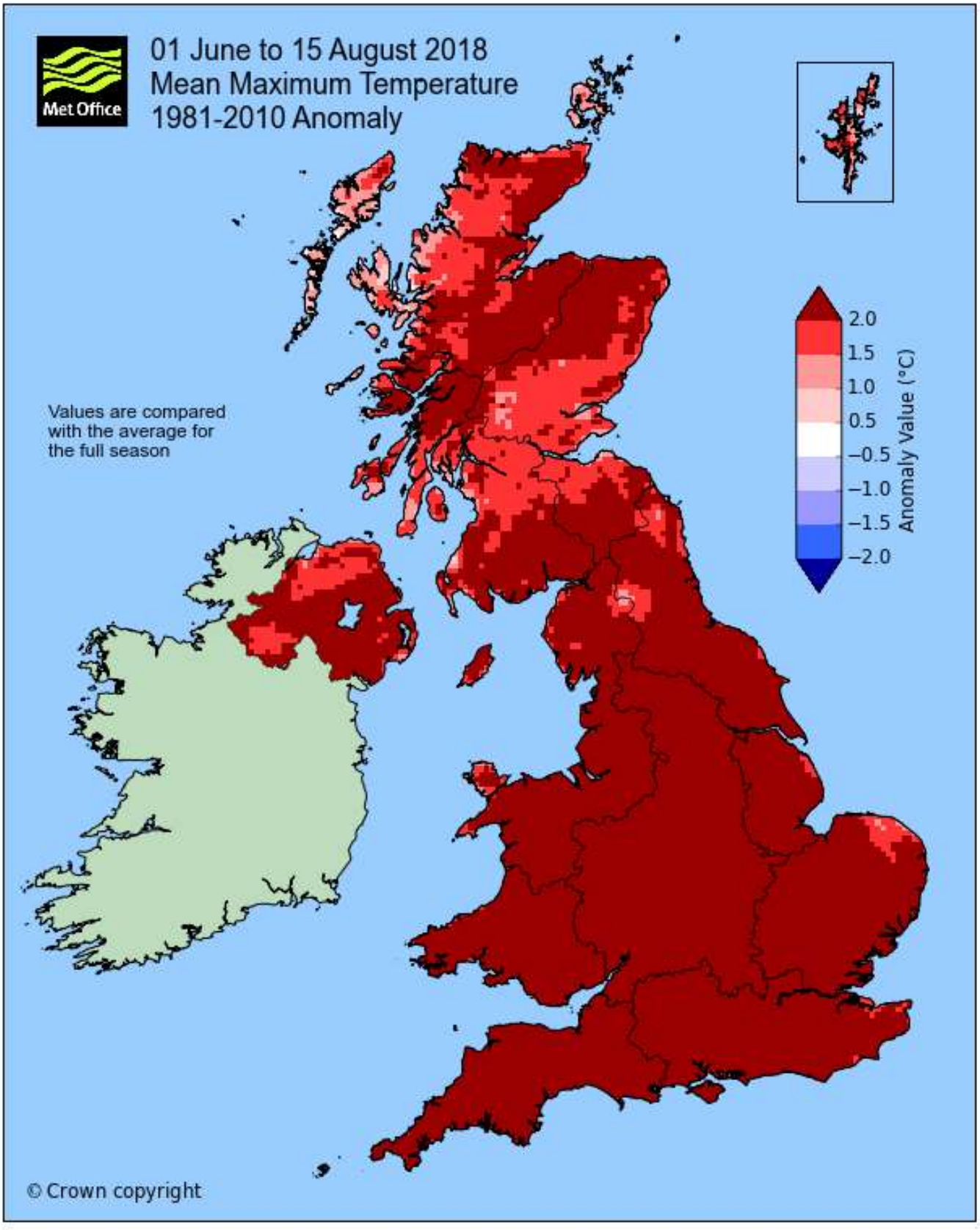
It's been a long hot summer for many in the UK this year, but where does 2018 stand in comparison to previous record summers?

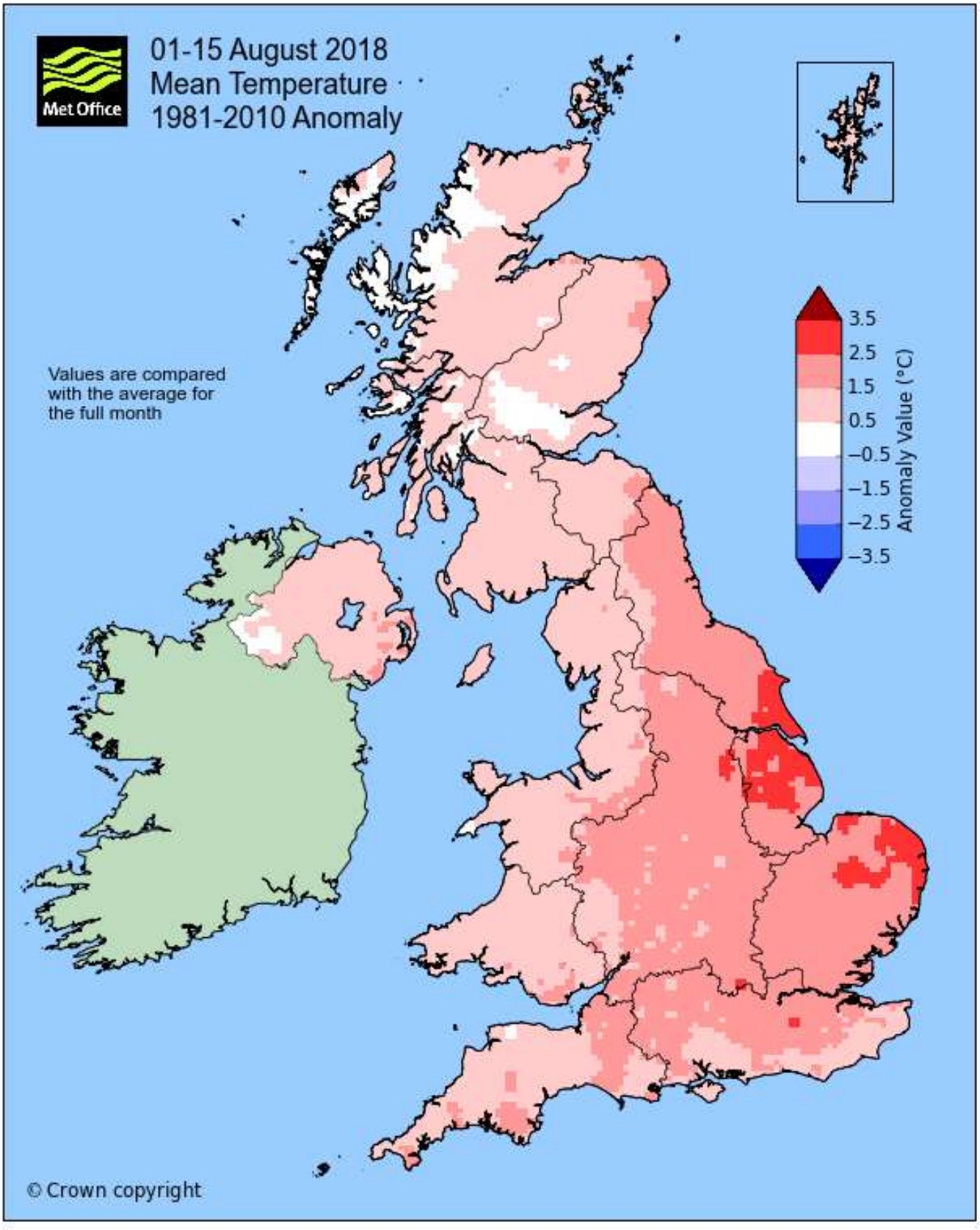
It already looks certain this summer – June, July and August - is going to be one of the warmest on record for the UK, after prolonged periods of hot weather. The latest mid-month statistics for August suggest the race for the very top spot in terms of temperature is still wide open.

After the third-warmest June and second-warmest July in our official national records dating back to 1910, this year is currently vying with the current record holder, 2006, as the warmest summer for mean temperature (which includes both day and night temperatures). The mean temperature for 2018 is currently at 16.1 °C – that's exactly the same at this point in August of the record-holding summer of 2006. The final figure for 2006 was 15.8 °C.



Even if temperatures are around or below average for the rest of meteorological summer (through to the end of August), this year is likely to finish in the top five. As of 15 August 2018, the mean UK temperature for this month is currently 16.3 °C – this compares with a long term average for August of 14.9 °C.

The record mean temperature for August was 17.3 degrees in 1995. Although the mid-month figure is some way short of this – currently August 2018 stands as the eighth-warmest on record – the consistently warm weather throughout June, July and August raises the prospect of more notable ranking of average temperature for the summer as a whole.



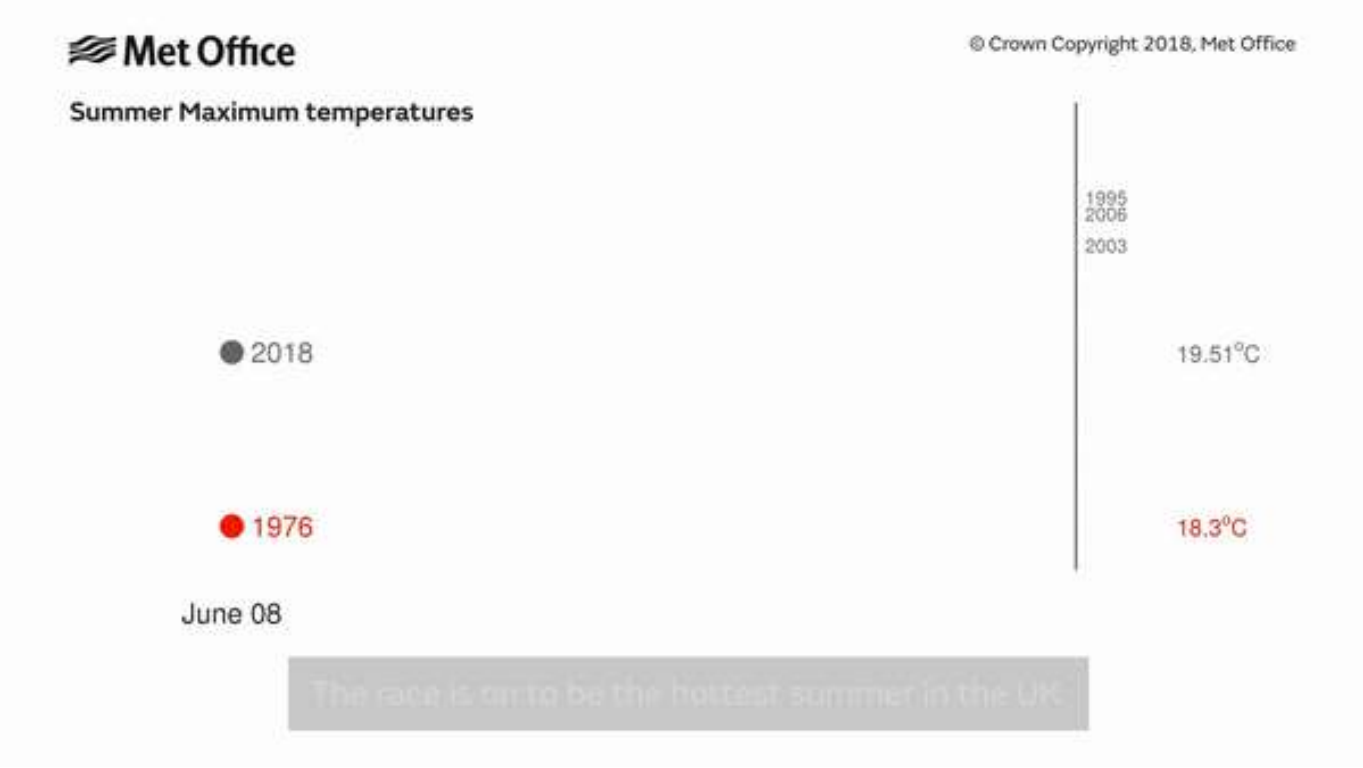
Usually we will only quote statistics to the nearest 0.1 °C, but it is worth noting that the top three warmest summers for mean temperature are separated by just 0.01 °C – with 2006 at 15.78 °C, while 2003 and 1976 are tied in joint second at 15.77 °C .

The picture is a bit clearer when looking at average maximum temperature, where 1976 is the record holder with 21.0 °C, which is more comfortably ahead of 1995 in second place with 20.6 °C.

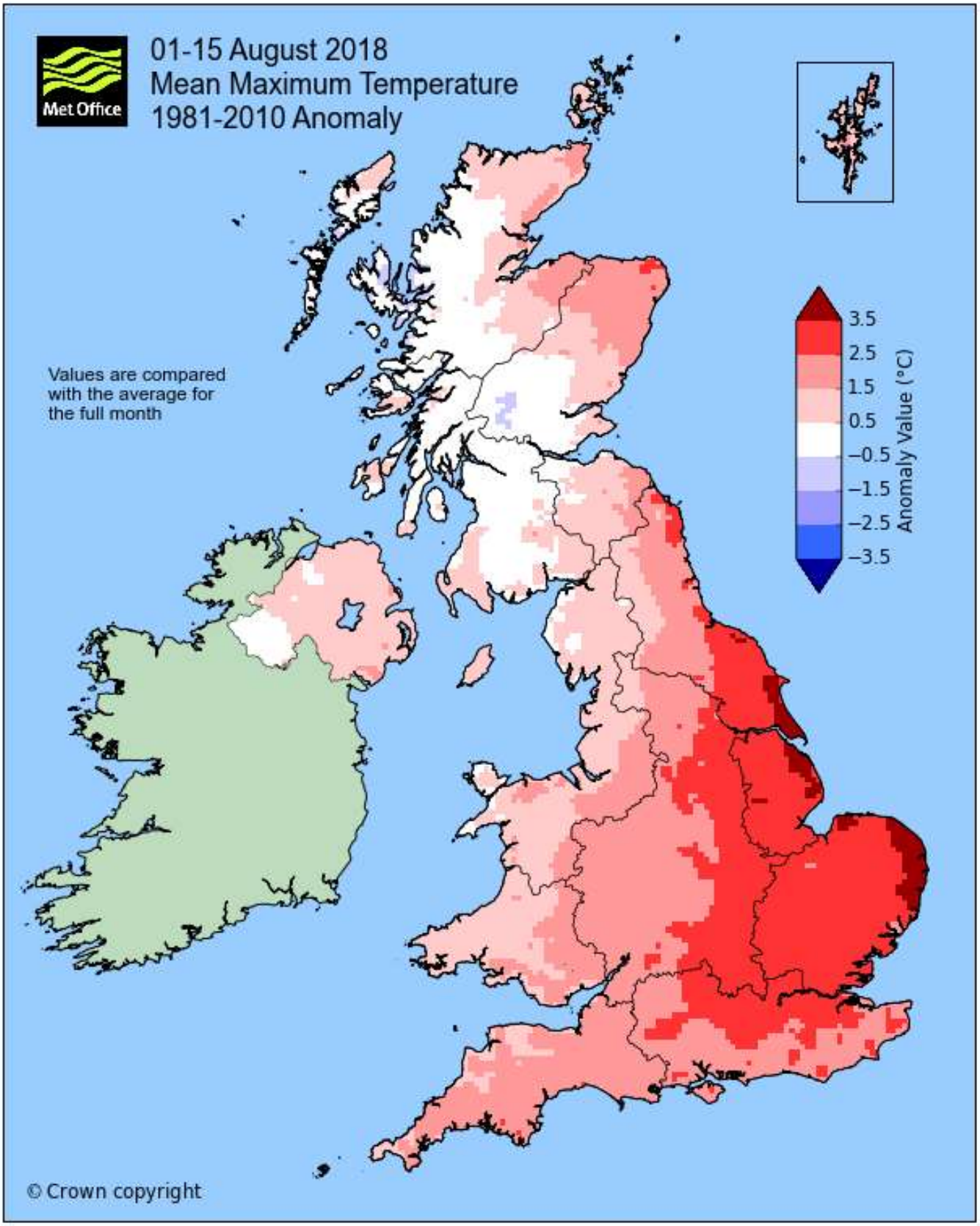
By this measure this year is vying with 1976 for the top spot – at present the average maximum figure for 2018 stands at 21.1 °C. How the rest of this August pans out will have an effect on the final standings, but 2018 is almost certain to be one of the hottest on this measure as well.

Dr Mark McCarthy, Head of the Met Office National Climate Information Centre, explains: “Looking at maximum temperatures might seem to chime more with our perceptions, as our memories tend to focus on those hot days when the temperatures really peaked, rather than the mild nights.

“However, by including night and daytime temperatures, the mean temperature measure gives a fuller picture of what the UK climate is doing. On this measure it’s clear that the meteorological summer of 2018 is exceptional, simply for the consistent levels of warmth seen throughout the period so far.”



As you can see in the ‘Summer Maximum’ graph, this year is currently warmer than 1976 – but that summer saw a warm spell in August which is likely to bring it back in contention. It remains to be seen whether this August will be cool or warm, so it’s impossible to say which year will end up as the record. But it is reasonably safe to say that this year will be amongst the warmest.



Looking at the first half of August 2018 itself, it's clear that although temperatures throughout the UK have been warmer than average, it is England that has seen the most pronounced effects – particularly the South East and East Anglia. If East Anglia's daily maximum temperature remains at its current level of 25.2 °C it would easily be the hottest on record, beating 1997's 25.1 °C. However, on the mean temperature measure it is currently – at 19.4 °C - some way off the 19.9 °C set in 1997.

Summer 2018 so far (1 June to 15 August 2018)

	Maximum temp		Mean temps		Rainfall		Sunshine	
Area	Actual C	Anom	Act C	Anom	Actual mm	Anom %	Actual hours	Anom %
UK	21.1	2.5	16.1	1.7	130.1	54.0	555.9	110.1
England	23.0	2.9	17.4	2.0	86.3	44.5	619.9	111.0
Wales	21.3	2.8	16.3	1.8	136.8	47.9	588.5	113.1
Scotland	18.2	2.0	13.9	1.4	195.6	64.1	456.6	107.3
N Ireland	20.0	2.1	15.4	1.5	160.2	62.9	466.9	109.6

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